

CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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CAL FIRE and California National Guard Train in the Air Annual Training Prepares Military Pilots for Firefighting Mission

As California enters its fourth year of drought, CAL FIRE and the California National Guard will be holding their annual fire aviation training in preparation for the peak fire season ahead. The training this year will be held April 10-12, 2015 at the CAL FIRE Academy in Ione and Lake Pardee in Amador County.

“As the drought continues to create extreme fire conditions, it is more important than ever to train with our partners in order to be prepared for our state’s inevitable wildfires,” said Chief Ken Pimlott, director of CAL FIRE. “During years of high fire activity, the assistance from the California National Guard has been vital in aiding us battle large, damaging fires.”

CAL FIRE and the California National Guard have worked in cooperation for over three decades, enabling CAL FIRE to augment its helicopter fleet during times when the department is battling numerous large wildfires at the same time. The training that the National Guard pilots and crewmembers receive includes basic incident management, firefighting operations and safety.

“Cal Guard aircraft and crews train throughout the year so we’ll be ready when fire season inevitably arrives,” said Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, Adjutant General of the California National Guard. “But this is a team effort, and the annual training in Ione is critical in making sure we stay in sync with CAL FIRE and all our partner agencies in keeping Californians safe.”

The most effective way to teach crews is by utilizing the tools they will have while fighting a wildfire, including water. In order to conserve the water the crews will use, the staff will work closely with local water districts to identify drop areas in ravines and drainages that will allow the water to work its way back into the lake.

CAL FIRE will hold similar trainings with the United States Marine Corps and Navy. “Military pilots have skills we can draw upon when we need assistance on firefighting missions,” said Chief Ken Pimlott.

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CAL FIRE has the largest aerial firefighting fleet in the world, with over 50 aircraft, including 11 UH-1H Super Huey helicopters.

For more information on how California is dealing with the drought, click [here](#).

For water conservation ideas, visit [here](#).

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Photos available: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/calfire/sets/72157629797798929/>

Video available: <http://youtu.be/aEpwD9sgXKM>

Media Availability

Who: CAL FIRE and California National Guard

What: Training and instruction with military helicopters on the ability to collect and drop water during wildland firefighting efforts and to safely integrate into fireground operations.

Where: CAL FIRE Academy, 4501 Highway 104, Ione and Lake Pardee

When: Saturday, April 11, 2015. Training will take place from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.